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SHULTZ WELCOMES APOLOGY BY ISRAEL

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 1 — Secretary of State George P. Shultz said today that the United States welcomed Israel's apology for the purported espionage activities of Jonathan Jay Pollard, a Navy counterintelligence analyst accused of spying for Israel.

"I think this is an excellent statement and we are satisfied by it," he told reporters as he flew to Colombia for a meeting of the Organization of American States.

His quick response to the apology appeared to be part of an American effort to prevent the Pollard incident from causing permanent damage to relations between the United States and Israel. It reflected the views of other senior officials who have said in the last few days that the Administration was determined that whatever the outcome of the Pollard case, it should not disrupt the overall relationship.

"We have full confidence in Israel's determination and ability to pursue this case down to the last detail and to bring those responsible to account," Mr. Shultz said.

Previous Statement

His conciliatory comments today followed a strongly worded statement, issued Friday, in which the State Department said it was "dismayed" by Israel's lack of cooperation in the Pollard investigation.

It remained unclear today whether the Federal Bureau of Investigation would be permitted to interview two Israeli diplomats who have been identified as Mr. Pollard's contacts in the United States.

In the statement, the Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, said he was sorry for whatever Israeli spying on the United States that took place, and said that if the espionage allegations were confirmed, the unit involved would be dismantled.

President Reagan, when he arrived in Santa Monica, Calif., to tape a television show, was asked by reporters whether he was satisfied with the apology. He gestured noncommittally and did not reply.

While Israeli Government officials said today that the F.B.I. would be permitted to talk with the diplomats, a senior Justice Department official indicated that he knew of no final agreement that would permit such interviews. A State Department official said the interviews "are something for the F.B.I. to figure out."

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Access to Diplomats

Law-enforcement officials have complained bitterly over Israel's refusal to allow questioning of the diplomats, Ilan Ravid and Yosef Yagur. Mr. Ravid has been deputy science attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, and Mr. Yagur science attaché in the Israeli Consulate in New York.

They were withdrawn to Israel soon after the arrest of Mr. Pollard earlier this month on charges of supplying classified documents to Israel. Mr. Pollard's wife, Anne L. Henderson-Pollard, was arrested and accused of illegally obtaining classified documents.

Mr. Pollard, 31 years old, worked as a counterterrorism specialist for the Navy and had access to top-secret documents about the capabilities of foreign naval fleets.

Federal law enforcement officials also welcomed the Israeli apology today, but said they still wanted to talk with the two Israeli diplomats. "We like to look at people in the eye in order to assess the information that they give us," said Assistant Attorney General Stephen S. Trott.

'Take Them at Their Word'

In an interview on the NBC News program "Meet the Press," Mr. Trott was asked whether the F.B.I. should interview the diplomats in the United States. "Where they take place is irrelevant," he said of the proposed interviews. "The important thing is that we get the information that we need in order to complete this investigation, and I can guarantee you that we will get that information."

Mr. Trott said the Justice Department was "very pleased" with the Israeli statement, adding: "We will take them at their word, but the proof is in the pudding. We intend to consider this an invitation to participate in the investigation."

In a separate interview, the F.B.I. Director, William H. Webster, said the United States would not be deterred from prosecuting spies who sell Government secrets to allies.

"It doesn't make any difference who he sells it to," Mr. Webster said, referring to Mr. Pollard. "He has betrayed his country, if those allegations are proved in court."

'Limited Resources'

But Mr. Webster acknowledged in another television appearance, on the ABC News program "This Week," that the F.B.I. must limit its surveillance of possible espionage activities by allies. "Those countries that we know are hostile to us and present national security get our full attention with the resources, the limited resources, that we have," he said. "We do not have the resource to keep track of our friends in the same way."

Over the last two weeks, four Americans, including the Pollards, have been arrested on espionage charges. The others are Larry Wu-Tai Chin, a retired analyst for the Central Intelligence Agency, and Ronald W. Pelton, a former National Security Agency analyst charged with selling secrets to the Soviet Union.

Federal officials have said Vitaly Yurchenko, a Soviet defector who fled to the West last summer but returned to Moscow in November, implicated Mr. Pelton and a former C.I.A. agent, Edward L. Howard, who fled the United States earlier this year after he was placed under F.B.I. surveillance.